"I am Joaquin"
By RODOLFO "CORKY" GONZALES

I am Joaquin,
Lost in a world of confusion,
Caught up in a whirl of a gringo society,
Confused by the rules, Scorned by attitudes,
Suppressed by manipulations, And destroyed by modern society.
My fathers have lost the economic battle and won the struggle of cultural survival.
And now! I must choose between the paradox of
Victory of the spirit, despite physical hunger
Or
to exist in the grasp of American social neurosis,
stereilization of the soul, and a full stomach.
YES,
I have come a long way to nowhere, Unwillingly dragged by that
monstrous, technical industrial giant called
Progress and Anglo success
I look at myself. I watch my brothers.
I shed tears of sorrow.
I sow seeds of hate.
I withdraw to the safety within the
Circle of life . . .
MY OWN PEOPLE
I am Cuauhtemoc,
Proud and Noble Leader of men, King of an empire,
civilized beyond the dreams of the Gachupin Cortez,
Who also is the blood, the image of myself.
I am the Maya Prince.
I am Netzahualcoyotl,
Great leader of the Chichimecas.
I am the sword and flame of Cortez the despot.
And
I am the Eagle and Serpent of the Aztec civilization.
I owned the land as far as the eye could see under the crown of Spain,
and I toiled on my earth and gave my Indian sweat and blood for the
Spanish master,
Who ruled with tyranny over man and beast and all that he could trample
But . . .
THE GROUND WAS MINE.
I was both tyrant and slave.
As Christian church took its place in God's good name,
to take and use my Virgin strength and Trusting faith,
The priests both good and bad, took
But
gave a lasting truth that
Spaniard, Indian, Mestizo
Were all God's children
And from these words grew men who prayed and fought
for their own worth as human beings, for that
GOLDEN MOMENT
Of
FREEDOM.
I was part in blood and spirit of that courageous village priest
Hidalgo in the year eighteen hundred and ten
who rang the bell of independence
and gave out that lasting cry:
El Grito de Dolores,
"Que mueran los Gachupines y que viva la Virgin de Guadalupe"
I sentenced him who was me.
I excommunicated him my blood.
I drove him from the Pulpit to lead a bloody revolution for him and me I
took him.
His head, which is mine and all of those who have come this way,
I placed on that fortress wall to wall for Independence.
Morelos!
Matamoros!
Guerrero!
All Compañeros in the act,
STOOD AGAINST THAT WALL OF INFAMY
to feel the hot gouge of lead which my hands made.
I died with them . . . I lived with them
I lived to see our country free.
Free from Spanish rule in eighteen -hundred- twenty-one.
Mexico was Free
The crown was gone
but
all his parasites remained and ruled with gun and flame and mystic power.
I worked, I sweated, I bled, I prayed and
waited silently for life to again commence.
I fought and died for Don Benito Juarez Guardian of the Constitution.
I was him on dusty roads on barren land
as he protected his archives as Moses did his sacraments.
He held his Mexico in his hand on
the most desolate and remote ground
which was his country And this Giant
Little Zapotec gave not one palm's breadth
of his country's land to Kings or Monarchs or Presidents
of foreign powers.
I am Joaquin.
I rode with Pancho Villa, crude and warm.
A tornado at full strength, nourished and inspired by the passion and
the fire of all his earth, people.
I am Emiliano Zapata.
"This Land This Earth Is OURS"
The Villages
The Mountains
The Streams
belong to Zapatistas.
Our life
Or yours is the only trade for soft brown earth and maiz.
All of which is our reward, A creed that formed a constitution for all
who dare live free!
"This land is ours . . . Father, I give it back to you.
Mexico must be free . . ."
I ride with Revolutionists
against myself.
I am Rural Course and brutal,
I am the mountain Indian, superior over all.
The thundering hoof beats are my horses.
The chattering of machine guns'
are death to all of me:
Yaqui
Tarahumara
Chamula
Zapotec
Mestizo
Español
I have been the Bloody Revolution,
The Victor,
The Vanquished,
I have killed and been killed.
I am despots Diaz and Huerta and the apostle of democracy
Francisco Madero.
I am the black shawled faithful women who die with me
or live depending on the time and place.
I am faithful, humble, Juan Diego, the Virgen de Guadalupe,
Tonatzin, Aztec Goddess too.
I rode the mountains of San Joaquin. I rode as far East and North as the
Rocky Mountains
And all men feared the guns of Joaquin Murrietta.
I killed those men who dared to steal my mine,
who raped and Killed my Love my Wife
Then
I Killed to stay alive.
I was Alfego. Baca, living my nine lives fully.
I was the Espinoza brothers of the Valle de San Luis.
All, were added to the number of heads that in the name of civilization
were placed on the wall of independence.
Heads of brave men who died for cause or principle.
Good or Bad.
Hidalgo! Zapata!
Murrietta! Espinozas!
are but a few.
They dared to face The force of tyranny of men who rule
by farce and hypocrisy I stand here looking back, and now I see the
present
and still I am the campesino I am the fat political coyote
I, of the same name,
Joaquin.
In a country that has wiped out All my history, stifled all my pride.
In a country that has placed a different weight of indignity upon my age
old burdened back.
Inferiority is the new load . . .
The Indian has endured and still emerged the winner,
The Mestizo must yet overcome, and the Gachupin will just ignore.  
I look at myself and see part of me who rejects my father and my mother  
and dissolves into the melting pot to disappear in shame.  
I sometimes sell my brother out and reclaim him  
for my own when society, gives me token leadership  
in society's own name.  
I am Joaquin, who bleeds in many ways.  
The altars of Moctezuma I stained a bloody red.  
My back of Indian Slavery  
was stripped crimson from the whips of masters who would lose their  
blood so pure when Revolution made them pay Standing against the walls  
of Retribution, Blood . . .  
Has flowed from me on every battlefield  
between Campesino, Hacendado Slave and Master and Revolution.  
I jumped from the tower of Chapultepec into the sea of fame;  
My country's flag my burial shroud;  
With Los Niños, whose pride and courage  
could not surrender with indignity their country's flag . . . in their land.  
To strangers now I bleed in some smelly cell from club.  
or gun. or tyranny.  
I bleed as the vicious gloves of hunger  
cut my face and eyes, as I fight my way from stinking Barrios  
to the glamour of the Ring and lights of fame or mutilated sorrow.  
My blood runs pure on the ice caked  
hills of the Alaskan Isles, on the corpse strewn beach of Normandy,  
the foreign land of Korea and now Viet Nam.  
Here I stand  
before the Court of Justice Guilty for all the glory of my Raza to be  
sentenced to despair.  
Here I stand Poor in money Arrogant with pride  
Bold with Machismo Rich in spirit and faith  
My knees are caked with mud.  
My hands calloused from the hoe.  
I have made the Anglo rich yet Equality is but a word, the Treaty of  
Hidalgo has been broken  
and is but another treacherous promise. My land is lost  
and stolen,  
My culture has been raped, lengthen  
the line at the welfare door and fill the jails with crime.  
These then are the rewards this society has For sons of Chiefs  
and Kings and bloody Revolutionists.  
Who gave a foreign people all their skills and ingenuity  
to pave the way with Brains and Blood  
for those hordes of Gold starved Strangers  
Who changed our language and plagiarized our deeds  
as feats of valor of their own. They frowned upon our way of life  
and took what they could use.  
Our Art  
Our Literature  
Our music,  
they ignored so they left the real things of value and grabbed at their  
own  
destruction by their Greed and Avarice
They overlooked that cleansing fountain of nature and brotherhood
Which is Joaquin.
The art of our great señors Diego Rivera
Siqueiros Orozco is but another act of revolution for the Salvation of
mankind.
Mariachi music, the heart and soul of the people of the earth,
the life of child, and the happiness of love
The Corridos tell the tales of life and death, of tradition,
Legends old and new, of Joy of passion and sorrow of the people:
who I am.
I am in the eyes of woman, sheltered beneath
her shawl of black, deep and sorrowful eyes,
That bear the pain of sons long buried or dying, Dead
on the battlefield or on the barbwire of social strife.
Her rosary she prays and fingers
endlessly like the family working down a row of beets to turn around and
work and work
There is no end.
Her eyes a mirror of all the warmth and all the love for me,
And I am her And she is me.
We face life together in sorrow.
anger, joy, faith and wishful thoughts.
I shed tears of anguish as I see my children disappear behind the shroud
of mediocrity
never to look back to remember me.
I am Joaquin.
I must fight And win this struggle for my sons,
and they must know from me Who I am.
Part of the blood that runs deep in me
Could not be vanquished by the Moors
I defeated them after five hundred years,
and I endured.
The part of blood that is mine
has labored endlessly five-hundred years under the heel of lustful
Europeans
I have still here!
I have endured in the rugged mountains of our country
I have survived the toils and slavery, of the fields.
I have existed in the barrios of the city,
in the suburbs of bigotry, in the mines of social snobbery,
in the prisons of dejection, in the muck of exploitation
and in the fierce heat of racial hatred.
And now the trumpet sounds,
The music of the people stirs the
Revolution, Like a sleeping giant it slowly rears its head
to the sound of Tramping feet Clamouring voices Marlachi strains
Fiery tequila explosions The smell of chile verde and
Soft brown eyes of expectation for a better life
And in all the fertile farm lands, the barren plains,
the mountain villages, smoke smeared cities
We start to MOVE.
La Raza!
Mejicano!
Español!
Latino!
Hispano!
Chicano!
or whatever I call myself,
I look the same
I feel the same
I cry
and
Sing the same
I am the masses of my people and I refuse to be absorbed.
I am Joaquin
The odds are great but my spirit is strong
My faith unbreakable
My blood is pure
I am Aztec Prince and Christian Christ
I SHALL ENDURE!

Rodolfo Gonzales, boxer, civil rights organizer and poet, died on April 12, 2005.